

VZCZCXRO8047  
OO RUEHDA  
DE RUEHAK #0218/01 0420614  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 110614Z FEB 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8747  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC//PA  
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU  
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 9465  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 5363  
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 3598  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 7113  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 6974  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3563  
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU  
RHMFISS/USDOCO 6ATAF IZMIR TU  
RHMFISS/39OS INCIRLIK AB TU  
RHMFISS/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU  
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU  
RHMFISS/AFOSI DET 522 INCIRLIK AB TU  
RUEUITH/AFLO ANKARA TU

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000218

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2009

In Today's Papers

PM Erdogan's Reaction to IMF

Radikal, Vatan, Milliyet, Yeni Safak, Sabah, Hurriyet: Speaking at an award ceremony for small and medium size enterprises in Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, PM Erdogan responded to a criticism that IMF deal was delayed. Erdogan said "Sorry, but we won't sign a deal with the IMF if it is not to Turkey's benefit. They bring a new clause to each meeting. IMF exists to help the countries affected by the economic crisis. If they bring a more distressing protocol at a time like this, I will not sign it. Turkey's debt to IMF was around \$23.5 billion in 2002 when the AKP came to power. Now this figure has dropped to \$8 billion. If IMF does not agree, then we pay our debt to it and proceed on our way by our own resources."

Baykal in Brussels

Milliyet, Zaman, Cumhuriyet, Hurriyet, Vatan, Sabah: Main opposition party CHP leader Deniz Baykal is in EU's capital Brussels after a long time. Baykal met with EU Commissioner for enlargement Olli Rehn. Following the meeting, Rehn and Baykal had a joint press conference. Baykal said "we believe that it is our obligation to support negotiation process because Turkey's relations with the EU is a national matter." Olli Rehn, on his part, said "It is very important for Turkey to work out compromise in uniting different lifestyles within the framework of democratic secularism." Mainstream Sabah reports that Baykal and Turkey's Chief EU negotiator and State Minister Egemen Bagis were on the same plane to Brussels. Bagis informed Baykal on Turkey's EU reform program on the plane. Earlier, Baykal had refused to meet Bagis when the EU negotiator toured party leaders to seek support for the EU bid.

Babacan: "From Now On, Americans Will Listen to Turkey" (Zaman) Islamist-oriented Zaman reports Foreign Minister Babacan told a press conference yesterday "American officials will from now on listen more to Turkey regarding developments in the Middle East." Babacan's comments come after he met with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke in Munich over the weekend. Mainstream Hurriyet reports "Babacan Sent a Warning to the U.S. During the Security Conference in Munich Over the Weekend," regarding the potential passage of the

Armenian Genocide Resolution (AGR) in the U.S. Congress. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "Babacan warned U.S. officials that the passage of the AGR could harm the progress made in relations between Turkey and Armenia."

#### Editorial Commentary on AGR

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Turkey and Armenia continue to maintain their contacts and Foreign Minister Babacan is doing his best to pursue improved bilateral dialogue with Armenia. The path is long because there are at least 50 issues to resolve before the establishment of diplomatic ties can be realized, but Turkey is getting there. However, if the U.S. Congress passes the Armenian Genocide Resolution, it will undermine the diplomatic progress between Turkey and Armenia."

Ekrem Dumanli wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "Those who claim anti-Semitism is on the rise in Turkey comprise a small circle of folks who do not want Turkey to progress. Anti-Semitism has never been a problem in Turkey, and anti-Semitism will not be a problem in the future either. However, if the AGR passes in the U.S. Congress, Turkish-Israeli relations will be damaged. Losing Turkey in this region might be a worst case scenario for Israel."

#### 'Susurluk' Suspect Agar Appears before Court

Media outlets report former Interior Minister Mehmet Agar appeared Tuesday before court in connection with the Susurluk scandal of "deep state-mafia" links, 12 years after the scandal broke out. Agar is charged with forming an illegal armed organization. Agar rejected the charges in his first hearing, and told the court he

ANKARA 00000218 002 OF 003

only "served the state." He said he never met Abdullah Catli, a leading right wing-mafioso figure who died in a traffic accident in the same car with a former police chief. Agar is charged with issuing a gun license and fake passport for Catli. Agar also praised intelligence operative Korkut Eken and police intelligence chief Ibrahim Sahin, both known to be controversial figures who are also suspects in the ongoing 'Ergenekon' case.

High Court: Wiretapping Alone Not Sufficient to Charge Suspects  
Media outlets highlight an important ruling of the Court of Appeals (Yargitay,) which rejected yesterday a penalty given to suspected arms smugglers in the southeastern city of Gaziantep. Yargitay says there was no solid evidence to support the charges other than wiretapped telephone conversations. Papers expect the ruling to have an impact on the ongoing investigation of the 'Ergenekon' formation, in which most of the charges in the indictment are based on bugged phone talks. After the ruling, papers expect most of the Ergenekon suspects to object to their detention.

#### Mubarak's Jet Diplomacy for a Lasting Peace (Sabah)

Media outlets note the importance regional leaders are placing on Turkey's role in seeking a solution to the Palestinian issue. Following Palestinian President Abbas' visit to Ankara this weekend, Egyptian President Mubarak is expected in Istanbul tomorrow. Leftist Taraf reports in "Mubarek Is Coming to Istanbul," that "because of Turkey's mediation efforts for a lasting peace in the Middle East, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will come to Ankara in the wake of Palestinian President Abbas' visit here this weekend." In addition, Taraf notes Mubarak's visit comes "amid criticisms from other Arab countries that only Arab countries should be involved in the Mid East peace process," and Mubarak "is showing that Turkey has an important role to play in the process" as "Foreign Minister Babacan pledged Turkey will always support Egypt's mediation efforts." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet calls the visit "a clear indication that Turkey will play a key role in support of peace negotiations led by Egypt." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports unnamed diplomatic sources said "Turkey and Egypt are not rivals in the Middle East," as "Turkey is popular among Palestinian groups" and "Ankara supports Cairo's leadership role in the process."

#### A Right Wing Coalition Expected in Israel (Milliyet)

Media is united in predicting a victory for the right in Israel's elections, but the larger issue here is concern over the effect a right-wing win will have on the peace negotiations. In "The Hawks

Will Be Elected," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "Even though 20% of the electorate is undecided, it is likely that the far right will see an increase in votes." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "In Israel, There Are Expectations for a Right Wing Coalition." Leftist Taraf reports "The Israeli Public's Trust in The Far Right Is on The Rise." Mainstream Sabah reports, "The Three Top Candidates Are Using the Gaza Operations to Win Votes," and "the outcome of this election is likely to complicate efforts toward peace in the region." Meanwhile, mainstream NTV reports, "Palestinians are not hopeful about the outcome of elections in Israel."

#### Editorial Commentary on Municipalities' Free Distribution of Household Goods

Oktay Eksi wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The widespread distribution of free household goods from is a clear violation of law and an obvious election-time bribe. When government officials criticize those who oppose this election bribery, they clearly stand against the implementation of laws and regulations."

Gungor Mengi wrote in mainstream Vatan: "The Higher Board of Elections has warned that the free distribution of household goods by a municipality prior to local elections is a constitutional violation; but who is going to enforce this law? Turkey has become a country that is ruled by a government who buys votes in the name

ANKARA 00000218 003 OF 003

of free elections."

A cartoon from today's Milliyet depicts a man with no shoes, ragged clothes, and no water who has just received a new white washing machine from the AKP-led municipality. The irony is, how will this man run a brand new washing machine with no water?

#### Baghdad Vetoes Kurdish Visas (Milliyet)

Mainstream Milliyet reports the Iraqi Interior Ministry warned that foreigners to enter Iraq through the border crossings controlled by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in the north would be penalized. A statement which was issued after the arrest of an unidentified Italian national arrested in Fallujah for entering Iraq on a ten day visa issued by the KRG says the sole authority for issuing visas for foreigners was the Iraqi Interior Ministry.

#### Iranian Gays Face Discrimination, Violence in Turkey

Mainstream Milliyet reports gay Iranian refugees, who fled to Turkey to escape persecution in their country, said they were settled in conservative provinces such as Van, Kayseri, Isparta, and Nevsehir where they were subjected to insults and mistreatment by local Turks. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite and Transsexual Platform prepared a report after meeting with 70 Iranian refugees settled in Kayseri, Eskisehir, Isparta and Ankara from November 2007-June 2008. The asylum seekers said if they had opted to stay in Iran, they would face a series of penalties from whipping to execution, and that they had to flee without even notifying their families. "Being subjected to discrimination and violence in the conservative provinces they were settled where life is difficult even for the local gays, Iranian refugees escape to major cities such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara," says the report. The Iranians said people spit on them on the streets, that they were insulted by being called "faggot" and other names, and that they had to change their homes constantly. "They don't help, they only deride us," an Iranian told Milliyet.

TV News (CNN Turk)

#### Domestic

- A post office in Istanbul's conservative Sultangazi neighborhood is robbed by unidentified gunmen.
- The Nationalist Action Party, MHP, marks the 40th anniversary of its foundation.
- State Minister Kursad Tuzmen says economic stimulus packages in the U.S. and Europe had not been effective, and warned that the

Turkish economy should be ready to face new hardships.

- A survey by Turkey's Central Bank predicts the year-end inflation to stand at 7.22 percent.

#### World

- A new poll conducted in Gaza by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion says support for Hamas has drastically gone down following the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

- American Thinker journal says moderate Arab powers were "uneasy" with the policies of Turkish PM Erdogan.

- Pollsters say Israel's national election outcome is likely to be determined by undecided voters.

- Slovenia's parliament approves Croatia's and Albania's efforts to join NATO.

JEFFREY